

August 12, 1982

Sir Hans Kornberg  
Marine Biological Laboratory  
Woods Hole, MA 02453

Dear Hans:

The book is called "A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret Story of Chemical and Biological Warfare" and was written by Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, both BBC television people. It was published in 1982 by Hill and Wang, 19 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003 (a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Whether or not it was also published in Great Britain is unclear. I am sorry to be unable to send you a copy but I came home to find our son David reading it.

I can confirm the information Paul gave you, since I was a member of the Academy committee (Assembly of Life Sciences) to which the U.S. Army proposal came for review. As reported in Nature on 24 June, the Assembly declined to accept proposals for classified work or work involving biological warfare. That much is public. The minutes of the meetings are privileged. However I will tell you one rather obvious point that did figure in the discussion and may be of some use to you, namely, the impossibility of keeping work on defense against biological agents free from considerations of offensive agents (except of course where physical barriers to infection are concerned). This is especially true when the agent against which defense is sought is "unknown", that is an hypothetical agent that may be developed. One useful response to this problem is improved intelligence leading to better identification of agents being developed by the feared antagonist.

I assume that you saw the corrected information in Budiansky's later article in Nature (July 8, 1982, p.111). That revised story appears to be correct. Thus, as far as we know, the only things going on are public as described in the initial Nature article Paul sent to you.

You may also know from the newspapers here that the U.S. Congress denied the requested for funds for new chemical weapons.

At present we then have no information suggesting current projects on biological weapons development. And we have the straightforward disclaimer from the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency to the RAC, as quoted in the article Paul sent to you. This assessment may be helpful in your conversation with Prime Minister. Still, as Paul says, it is essential that we all remain alert. And the Harris and Paxman book will give you many good reasons for maintaining constant vigilance.

There are two other people you might wish to talk with before returning home. Matt Meselson knows a great deal about chemical agent development here. And recently Norton Zinder has also become involved. In case you want to talk to me, the telephone number is 301-496-5957.

Finally, I should say that I am pleased to have this informal network of concerned individuals in our two countries. Let us just hope we do not have much need to use it.

Although it was wonderful to see you and your family in Woods Hole, it was all too brief. I hope it won't be so long before we have another chance.

Very best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Maxine Singer, Ph.D.  
Chief, Laboratory of Biochemistry  
National Cancer Institute